

BIBLE & BAGEL

Romans – Our Common Faith

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After encouraging the believers in Rome to be strong in the face of trials and tribulation, Apostle Paul now deals with the subject of Israel; in fact three chapters of this book are specifically focused on Israel. This shows the importance he placed on Israel and his desire for the Gentile believers in Rome to understand this. Many people in the church today, even leaders and scholars, believe that God no longer loves Israel nor does He have any place for them in His redemption plan, is this true? See what the Apostle says in the next three chapters...

Romans 9:1-5

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. NKJV

Apostle Paul begins by talking about his own feelings towards the Jewish people; he is so grieved for them that he was willing to give up his salvation for them. He felt this way about them because they had a special inheritance; first to be adopted by God, they had the covenants, the Torah, the service of God in the temple, all the promises that God made to them as a nation and the patriarchs. Most of all it was through this nation that Messiah Yeshua came and is sovereign over all, the eternal God.

We can see the intensity of Apostle Paul's feelings towards the Jews, but my question when I read this is; why did God include this in His Word? If these were merely the human emotions of the Apostle why is it included in the eternal Word of God? The answer is that this is also how God feels about the Jews. God is intensely grieving for His own people in whom He has placed such a rich heritage, yet have not received His salvation, it pains His heart. If this pains the heart of God, should we not also be grieve over it? Sadly many Christians don't care about the nation of Israel, some are even against them.

Israel has a very rich inheritance from God and we non-Jews share in that inheritanceⁱ with them because of Christ. We must therefore learn what that inheritance is and secondly appreciate the Jewish people and bless them for it.

Romans 9:6-9

6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."ⁱⁱ NKJV*

Apostle Paul now addresses the Jews in the issue of salvation. He tells them that it is not because the Word of God was ineffective among them but it is a matter of faith. He



uses the example of the birth of Isaac pointing out that Isaac was not born by human effort but by the promise of God which is recorded in Genesis 18. He is the son of promise through whom Abraham's seed would be establishedⁱⁱⁱ. This was a promise was received by faith by both Abraham and Sarah. Apostle Paul uses some harsh terminology here; saying that it is not their natural heritage as Jews that will save them but faith.

In the world today there is a mind-set that would try to tell us that all men are children of God because we were all created by Him, whilst it is a fact that we are all God's creation, it is not true that we are all His children. His children are people of faith; Apostle Paul pointed this out from the Old Testament in Genesis 21:12, we also have the New Testament. In John 1:12 we are told that those who put their faith in Yeshua are allowed to call themselves children of God. We have to understand that while God loves all men, he does make a distinction between the people of faith and those who are not of faith.

This applies to the Jews as well, God loves them and desires nothing more than they would come to faith, and he promises that they will, but we cannot believe in the lie that says that they can be saved by another covenant. When Yeshua said that all who believe in Him would be saved in John 3:16, he was speaking to a Jew, a Pharisee named Nicodemus. When Peter and John said that is no other name given by which people should be saved (Acts 4:12), they were speaking to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council. So the Jewish people, even though they are recipients of the covenants need Yeshua to be saved.

Therefore we, who share in the inheritance with them must take on God's heart for them and pray for and work towards their salvation.

ⁱ Ephesians 3:5-7

ⁱⁱ Genesis 18:10, 14

ⁱⁱⁱ Genesis 21:12

